

David & Bathsheba, #1- Prelude to Murder (Initial Steps that Lead to Sin)

James 4:2 (especially the first part) always intrigued, or perhaps better, “confused” me somewhat. The resulting conclusion of “murder” seemed a bit extreme for the impetus of “lust,” at least in general terms of James’ primary audience, cf. 1:1-2a. ... until I realized that Israel’s leader’s *lust* for position and power ultimately caused them to *murder* Jesus, cf. John 11:48-50; 12:9-10; Matt.27:18. But going back even further into Jewish history, I thought also of David and Bathsheba....

We all know that David ultimately *murdered* Uriah, the husband of Bathsheba. But how did a man that God described as, and selected to be king of Israel because he was, “*after His own heart*” (1Sam.13:22) get to the point where he was actually willing to kill an entirely innocent and faithful man? It wasn’t in a *fit of uncontrolled rage* that he saw in Saul (1Sam.18:10-12; 19:9-10) and then repeated himself. No, David’s ultimate sin was *devious, cold, and calculated*, cf. 2Sam.11:6-15. So, what were the *initial, early* steps that led such a man of God to be willing to kill? Some of them are both obvious and well-known, but some of them are a bit more subtle and things we might not have thought about perhaps as much as we should have...

David’s initial missteps that lead to murder from 2Sam.11:

1. **He wasn’t where he should have been, v.1a.** Previously, David had *led* Israel from the *frontlines*, cf. 10:15-17. But this time and for some unknown reason, David “*stayed at Jerusalem*” rather than *going out* and *leading* his troupes as they battled the Syrians. He was simply in the *wrong place* at the *wrong time*.

How often the initial *steps* of sin are simply those that put us somewhere we have no place being, cf. Prov.6:20-24; 7:6-9. Peter’s *denial* began with him “*sitting with them*” (*i.e.* Jesus’ *accusers* rather than His *disciples*), cf. Luke 22:54-55; Prov.13:20.

2. **He wasn’t doing what he should have been, v.1b.** With David *leading them in battle*, Israel was victorious, cf. 10:18-19. Israel was *at war*, v.7, but David was *at home in Jerusalem*, v.2. Being in the *wrong place* prevented him from doing *what he should have been doing*.

Being in the *wrong place* often leads us to doing *wrong things* (whether it is the *wrong time* or not). If the “*young man lacking sense*” had not *been where he shouldn’t have been*, then the woman “*dressed as a harlot*” would not have *enticed* him, and he would not have *followed* her “*as an ox goes to the slaughter*,” Prov.7:7,10-21,22. Although 2Sam.11 and Prov.7 regard *sexual sins*, many if not most of the times we *do what we should not* begin with us *being where we should not* (metaphorically or literally)!

3. **He wasn’t looking where he should have been, v.2.** Perhaps David’s *initial “seeing”* of Bathsheba was purely incidental or accidental. But, he was “*on the roof of his house*,” and apparently *looked long enough* to notice that Bathsheba was “*beautiful in appearance*.” The point is that once he *saw* her, he didn’t *go back inside*, but apparently *continued to look*. He *fanned/fed* this initial accidental flicker into a fire of *lust*.

Isn’t this precisely how sin usually happens with us? However innocent our initial motives may be, something happens (when we are *in the wrong place* and usually when we are *doing things we ought not*) that allows us the opportunity to either douse the spark or fan it until it becomes a flame. It doesn’t take much effort or water to douse a spark, but it takes bucket-loads of effort and water to put out a raging fire. We can’t blame God if we’re not *where we should be* and *doing what we should be*! In fact, we can’t even blame Satan (though he certainly helps us all he can). No, we have to take responsibility

for our own *actions* (or *inactions*), as well as the *desires* that prompt them, Jas.1:13-14; cf. Job 31:1; 2Pet.2:14.

4. **He asked questions he should not have asked, v.3.** David *could have* simply turned and looked the other way. He *could have* gone back inside and dismissed the matter. But he didn't. He "*sent and inquired about the woman.*" He spoke when he *could have* kept silent. The questions may have seemed *innocent* to his servants, but were surely *fueling* his *flame* of intrigue into a *fire* of lust.

Herein we see another of the destructive powers of the *tongue*, cf. Jas.3:2. How often *sin* is precipitated by us merely *saying something* that we *ought not to say!* We, like David, further a conversation that we shouldn't be having in the first place. We ask (or answer) questions that ought not to be asked. And in so doing, give *the tongue* its power to become a "*fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell,*" Jas.3:6. Indeed, "*the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts great things. Behold how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire!*" Jas.3:5.

5. **He did what he should not have done, v.4.** Even with the mistakes (1-4) already made, David still had an opportunity to douse the flames and prevent the fire. He was told that Bathsheba is "*the wife of Uriah,*" v.3b. And as Nathan would later point out to him, God had blessed him greatly- including several *wives*, and would have given him *more*, cf. 12:8; but he "*took her... and lay with her,*" v.4. Why? Because he *could*? Perhaps, but surely we can see the importance of the small perhaps even subtle steps that descended to his sin.

No sin, even the *secret* ones, is committed *in a vacuum*. This means that not only does every sin have consequences (heat/smoke) that can further the destruction, but also that no sin is *isolated* from the steps that produced it. Some sins, like this one, are hard to stop once those initial steps have been taken. But we can *prevent* the *raging fire* by simply removing its *sparks, fans, and fuel* by: 1) being **where** we should rather than where we *shouldn't*; 2) doing **what** we should rather than what we *shouldn't*; 3) **looking** where/at what we *should* rather than where/at what we *shouldn't*; and, 4) **saying** what we *should* (or *nothing at all*) rather than what we *shouldn't*.

Conclusions

- The story of David's sin with Bathsheba obviously involves *lust* that is *sexual* in nature. It can teach us much in this regard if we will *look* and *listen* to it. But,
- Sin is sin, and as such, has many of the same *sparks, fans, and fuel* whether it is sexual in nature or otherwise. In any of its forms, sin is much easier to *prevent* than to *stop* once the *flames* burn hot... or to *restore* once its consequences have been manifested. So...
- *Be* where you ought, *do* what you ought, *look* where you ought, and *say* only what you ought and you can avoid much of sin's devastating consequences.

David & Bathsheba #2- The Cover Up: What Not to Do When We Sin (Wrong Steps After We Sin)

In our previous lesson from 2Sam.11, we noted some small and perhaps subtle yet significant steps that took David from Israel (and God's!) beloved king to lustful adulterer. Primarily, that he:

- Wasn't *where* he should have been, v.2a;
- Wasn't *doing* what we should have been doing, v.1;
- Wasn't *looking* where he should have been looking, v.2b;
- *Asked* what he should not have asked, v.3a; and then ultimately,
- *Did* what he should not have done, v.4.

This is not only "how" David sinned, it is also often the path we take to sin, Rom.15:4!

It is also important to note that while there are **always** *spiritual consequences* to sin (cf. Rom.6:23), there are **almost always** *physical consequences* to sin, v.5. And unfortunately, we humans typically are *more concerned* with the physical than spiritual! David is no exception in these regards.

Acts 8:22; 1John 1:9; and Jas.5:16 all provide the "right" or corrective steps to take *after* we have *walked, run, or fallen* into sin, but these are **not** the ones David initially took....

Instead, David took additional steps in the *wrong* direction (from right and God):

1. He *tried to conceal his sin* under a *pretense of honorable concern* and *with a gift*, vv.5-11.

- a. David *sent for Uriah* (v.6) and *asked concerning the welfare* of Joab, the people (of the army), and the state of the war, v.7. Obviously, such would have been unnecessary if David had been *where* he should have been and *doing* what he (as Israel's king) should have been doing, cf. vv.1-2.
- b. Then he *sent Uriah home* (to be *with Bathsheba* and thus *cover* his own sin), but note that a *present from the king* was also *sent after him*, v.8 (perhaps a *portion of the king's table* or *bounty*, cf. Gen.43:34). Presumably, this was to *flatter* and *puff-up* Uriah, but imagine how it made Bathsheba feel?
- c. But Uriah was much more honorable than the king, vv.9-11! David even *feigned concern* for Uriah's *welfare*, v.10; but Uriah's *reasoning remained sound* and his *honor* remained intact- what a comparison to the king's, v.11!
- d. How often we seek to *buy off* God and those whom we've sinned against with *gifts, niceties*, and other *hypocritical* actions! But these cannot *pay* or *atone* for sin, cf. Psalm 51:17! Uriah's sense of *duty* and *honor* should have been a *dagger* through the calloused heart of King David, v.11b, but it wasn't enough...

2. He *tried to hide his sin* by *corrupting the decent and honorable*, vv.12-13.

- a. David first *delayed* Uriah from his *duty* by getting him to remain *the rest of that day* and *the next*, v.12. Perhaps this time was necessary to *plot* "Plan B" since "A" failed. But again, the *extra time* should have given David to realize his *folly* and *repent*... but he, instead, utilized it for further deceitfulness, cf. Prov.6:18!
- b. Since the *right-thinking* Uriah proved *incorruptible*- and thus prevented David's plot to have him *lie with Bathsheba* and cover his sin, David sought to *corrupt* and *remove his honor* with alcohol, v.13a. How many are the lessons here, cf. 1Thess.5:7-8; Prov.20:1!
- c. But Uriah, even *drunk*, again proved himself *more honorable* than David, v.13b!

- d. Prior to this point, David's sin has been his own. Now he has stooped to efforts to *dishonor* the *honorable* in seeking to *cover* his sin. We, too, sometimes seek to make *others party to our own sins* in efforts to *cover them*- but remember, *all* will ultimately be *revealed*, cp. 1Tim.5:22,24!

3. He stooped to pure treachery (involving others in his plot), vv.14-17.

- a. Thus far, David's labors to conceal his sin have been *somewhat restrained*. He has, as we've noted, *hypocritically* used a *pretense of concern* and a *gift of honor* as "bribes" for Uriah to go home to Bathsheba. He also has *gotten Uriah drunk*, but Uriah's honor prevailed. Now, *the gloves come off* so to speak...
- b. First, as you've undoubtedly noticed in prior studies, Uriah is used to *carry his own death warrant*, v.14. Surely, David's heart, *hardened by sin* as it was, would have been *melted* in *handing Uriah* this message. What if Uriah look at it? But David knew and trusted Uriah's faithfulness- that he wouldn't open a message to Joab! Now we see the *hardening* and *deceitfulness of sin* full-face, Heb.3:13!
- c. Second, David's instructions *required* others to become complicit in his sin, v.15. He instructed Joab to put Uriah *in the front line* of the *fiercest battle*, and then *withdraw from him* leaving all alone to face certain death. What had the *faithful, honorable*, Uriah done to deserve such a fate? How could "*a man after God's own heart*" write such an order? As we've noted, there were incremental, definite, and sequential steps.
- d. Third, Joab, also, proved more *faithful/honorable* than his king, cf. vv.16-25. It appears- both from the account of the event in vv.16-17, and its description by the messenger in vv.23-24, that Joab didn't do *exactly* as commanded by David. Apparently, although he *did* put Uriah *in harm's way*, there was no *withdrawal* from him. Perhaps there is some small consolation in that while Uriah did die *in vain*, he was *not alone*, v.24. Such hardly mitigates David's further duplicity.
- e. As was stated in the previous lesson, "Sin is not committed in a vacuum." It has *other* consequences (including *additional sin*)- often *unanticipated*, but sometimes *deliberately perpetrated* to cover the "original" sin. How often do *we lie* with the *premise of honor*, seek to *cheat* and *deprive others* of their honor, and *steal* honor or (spiritual) life itself from others just to "cover" our sin?

Conclusions:

- There is one more lesson forthcoming in this series. As we've noted David's *initial missteps* that led to sin, and his *efforts to conceal* it rather than simply *repent*, so too we are in fairness obligated highlight his *courageous comeback* wherein he, again, proved to be "*a man after God's own heart*."
- But for now, hopefully by carefully observing his *post-sin* missteps of 1) *Trying to conceal his sin under a pretense of honor* (and bribery); 2) *Trying to hide his sin with efforts to corrupt the honorable*; and, 3) *Stooping to an outright and outrageous act of treachery*- thus to *lie, cheat, and steal*, we can avoid these and simply do the "right" thing when we sin: *confess, repent, and pray* for forgiveness, cf. Acts 8:22; Jas.5:16!
- We either *have* or *will* sin as Christians. Just do the "right" thing instead of allowing it to get *bigger* (with *additional sins*), *worse* (by *involving others*), and perhaps ending in *tragedy* (with the loss of *physical* or *spiritual* life/lives)!

David & Bathsheba #3- Coming (and Becoming) Clean: David Finally Gets It Right

In the first lesson of this series (from 2Sam.11:1-4), we identified specific missteps (and omissions) that David took (or conversely failed to take) that led him from *lust* to *murder*, just as Jas.4:2 indicates: Wasn't *where* he should have been; Wasn't *doing* what he should have been; Wasn't *looking* where he should have been; Asked what he should not have (and didn't *hear/listen* to what he should have); and therefore, ultimately *did* what he should not have done. But we also noted in lesson #2 from vv.5-27 that David's missteps weren't only *pre-sin*, but that he continued with a few *post-sin* ones also, in that He: Tried to conceal his sin under a pretense of *honorable concern* and a *gift* (thus, in *hypocrisy*); Tried hide his sin by *corrupting the decent and honorable*; and then ultimately *stooped to pure treachery* (involving others in his plot).

But, then comes *Nathan*, the prophet sent by the Lord, with a story about two men and one little ewe lamb, 2Sam.12:1-24...

The parable, vv.1-4, was *spot-on* in every detail. Apparently it was presented to David as if to ascertain his judgment as king, or as a point of information concerning an perceived injustice in his kingdom... and it worked to perfection.

David pronounces sentence, vv.5-6, (without the benefit of specific knowledge of the culprit). David's judgment and sentence was both *swift* and *accurate* according to the Law: 1) the culprit *deserves to die*, Ex.21:12,14; Lev.20:10; and, 2) must pay *four-fold restitution*, Ex.22:1. These *punishments* would be enacted, just not quite in the way David envisioned (*the child would die*- more on this later; and *four sons of David*- *the child, Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah* would all be killed). Also note that "*David's anger burned greatly*"- surely as did *God's*! Thus, David's *righteous indignation* at this offence was "*after God's own heart*"!

David, finally, gets it right, v.13a, in his confession, "*I have sinned against the Lord.*"

- Didn't he sin *against Bathsheba*? *Against Uriah*? And even *against Joab*? Yes, but David recognized that *all sins* are first and foremost "*against the Lord*" because He is our *Creator*, and thus we are primarily accountable *to Him*, cf. Rom.14:12. Additionally, God *gave the Law(s)* which David violated- not Bathsheba, Uriah, or Joab. And finally on this point, it was God who *chose* and *put David on the throne* to lead Israel, not Bathsheba, Uriah, or Joab, vv.7-8. It was this *position and power* that David *abused* and *neglected*, v.9.
- David did not *deny his sin* as Saul had done, cf. 1Sam.15:13-14. He simply said, "*I have sinned.*"
- Neither did he *blame others for his sin*, cf. 1Sam.15:15,20-21. He said he had sinned "*against the Lord.*"
- Nor did he seek to *justify his sin*, cf. 1Sam.15:24. He admitted his guilt and culpability fully without denial, without blaming others, or seeking to justify or excuse himself.

God pronounces sentence, vv.13b,14, 10-12. Let's start with the last two of these first, then back up to the others:

- "*The Lord also has taken away your sin; you shall not die,*" v.13b. Surely this *forgiveness* hinged on David's full *confession*! If he, like Saul, had sought to deny his guilt, or blame others for it, David's own pronounced sentence would have been carried out *in full* against him. But David's now *broken* and *contrite heart* had returned to God, cf. Psalm 51; Psalm 32:3-7. And because of his confession and repentance, God can continue with his ultimate promised plan for *the house of David*, cf. 2Sam.7:12ff.

- However, “because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born to you shall surely die,” v.14. Herein is given the reason *the child* died instead of *David*. A child born to adultery fulfilling this promise would have been a cause for *blasphemy* and *continual reproach* upon Israel.
- Now the earlier *penalties* sentenced: “the sword shall never depart from your house...” v.10. Every “*man of war*” longs for peace- but David (nor his house/descendants) would never see it. The stated reasons are: 1) “*you have despised Me*” (taken Me *for granted*, cf. vv.7-8); and, 2) “*taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife*” (and by so doing “*despised the word of the Lord*” by violating His law, cf. v.9).

Additionally, David would be *publically shamed* and *debased before Israel* as he had done to God, vv.11-12. Absalom would *take David’s “wives before your eyes... in broad daylight... before all Israel, and under the sun,”* cf. 2Sam.16:21-22. Indeed, as we sow, so shall we reap, Gal.6:7-8.

- Finally, “*the child died,*” vv.15-23. Despite David’s *sincere confession, fasting and weeping* (in true repentance and earnest pleas to the contrary), the child *died* as the Lord had said, v.14. Spiritual confession and repentance- even when sincere, do not necessarily avert physical consequences to sin. David knew this. David accepted this, vv.22-23. **David accepted the consequences of his sin:**
 - Without complaint, v.19;
 - Continued *to worship* (did not blame God, nor turn from Him), v.20a;
 - And did what he could to *carry on and do right*, vv.20b,23-24.

Conclusions. As we have noted in detail the *mistakes/missteps* David made which not only *led to his sin*, but also *led his efforts to cover his sin* (and that made it much worse!), we surely must also learn from the things *he did right* after his sin:

1. David (ultimately/finally) **confessed His sin**. That’s *right thing* for us to do as well, whether *publically*, Jas.5:16; or *to God*, 1John 1:8-10. David’s sin was *secret* (2Sam.12:12) and his confession was apparently only to Nathan and God. When sin is of a *public* nature, the confession should be just as *public*.
2. David **accepted the consequences of His sin without complaint, and did not turn from God because of them**. All too often our “repentance” only lasts until the physical consequences of our sin begin to be meted out- then we *turn yet again* back to wicked ways. True repentance is “*without regret,*” 2Cor.7:10-11.
3. David **did what he could to make things right, and carried on in faithfulness**. And so must we. As David well knew, we cannot change the past, only the future.
4. As many as are the mistakes of David in this account- both *prior* and *post-sin*, we also should note and emulate the *right steps* he took in dealing with his sin and its consequences!